

House Bill 584
March 12, 2009
Presented by Paul Sihler
Senate Energy and Telecommunications Committee

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Bill No. HB 584

Mr. Chairman and committee members, for the record I am Paul Sihler, Administrator, Field Services Division of Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP).

HB 584 requires FWP, with the assistance of a committee, to develop a voluntary wind generation certification program that seeks to minimize the impacts to wildlife, wildlife habitat, and cultural and historic sites, and to report on the results of the program to the 62nd Legislature.

Montana has set a precedent for a similar, non-regulatory approach to forest practices, which has proven to be very successful over the last 20 years. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, rather than enact a state forest practices act, the Montana Legislature developed a voluntary program of best management practices in order to minimize the water quality impacts of timber harvesting on private, state and federal timber land. This program was also developed as a result of an interim study with a report to the Legislature, and provides a good example for how HB 584 might work.

FWP believes that HB 584 is a reasonable approach to addressing siting issues associated with wind power generation, and will carry out these duties within existing staff if it is enacted by the legislature. Because Section 4 provides that committee members are not entitled to compensation or reimbursement for expenses, there is no fiscal impact to FWP as a result of this bill.

FWP urges you to pass HB 584.